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July 21, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense, Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin:

On July 20, 2022, President Biden directed the Secretary of the Interior to advance wind energy development in the waters of Florida's Gulf Coast. I am concerned that wind energy development in the Gulf of Mexico, particularly east of the Military Mission Line (MML), will have a negative impact on our military readiness. For decades, it's been understood that new oil and gas leasing east of the MML is antithetical to our nation's military readiness. I am writing to encourage you to apply the same rigor in protecting the Eastern Gulf Test and Training Range from obstructive wind energy development as the Department has for new oil and gas leasing.

In May 2018, the Office of the Secretary of Defense submitted a report to the House Committee on Armed Services and House Committee on Natural Resources on "Preserving Military Readiness in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico". In that report, your Department rightly acknowledged, in no uncertain terms, the importance and uniqueness of the Eastern Gulf Test and Training Range stating, "The eastern Gulf of Mexico is an irreplaceable national asset". Moreover, your office concluded, "No other area in the world provides the U.S. military with ready access to a highly instrumented, network-connected, surrogate environment for military operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf and Indo-Pacific Theater."

China is our pacing threat and depriving our military of its only "surrogate environment" of the Indo-Pacific Theater is counterintuitive to our National Defense Strategy. Furthermore, the Air Force is working earnestly on modernizing the range to be the center of hypersonic testing and development, which is critical to closing the capability gap with China and Russia. Oil rigs and windmills, and the people required to build and maintain them, should not be in the same areas where experimental missiles are flying over their heads.

I am interested in understanding your perspective on this matter and any plans you have to protect this national treasure from the deliberate development of wind turbine range foulers. I ask that you provide my office a response on this matter no later than September 1, 2022. I look forward to your response and working with your Department to protect our military readiness.

Sincerely,



Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress